

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Maia Roothaan, and I am a resident of New Haven and student at Yale University.

I stand in support of HB 6616 and the effort to expand access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status and age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving, and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage. Expanding access to HUSKY is an important step towards this future.

Currently, despite paying over half a billion dollars in taxes annually, undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing the very programs their taxes fund, like HUSKY. As a result, 58% of the 113,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut are uninsured, a vast number in comparison to the 5.9% uninsured rate for all across Connecticut. This is a clear disparity in coverage and a health equity issue.

There is overwhelming evidence that increasing access to healthcare would greatly improve health outcomes in all aspects: fewer premature deaths, improvements in overall self-reported care, improved mental health and lower stress, better management of chronic conditions. According to the National Commission on Prevention Policies, 100,000 deaths could be averted each year just by improving the delivery of five preventive services.

The economic feasibility is also clear. The cost to Connecticut of covering HUSKY, annually, for all who are income eligible regardless of age and immigration status is merely 3% of the state's annual Medicaid budget. When individuals have health insurance, they are able to access preventative medicine and regular check-ups, thus resulting in fewer visits to the emergency department and lowering the cost of hospital uncompensated care—estimated to be savings around 63.3 million dollars.

The United States per capita health care spending is above the average of peer countries, and it fares worse on many health outcomes, including overall life expectancy. This paradox can only be addressed by expanding access to primary care for everyone. No one should have to forego needed medical treatments, or skip on a preventative care visit, because of lack of insurance. Health care is a human right.

I support expanding HUSKY to all regardless of age and immigration status, and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation.

Thank you for your time,

Maia Roothaan